



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
*1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990*

March 14, 2001

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Doreen Garcia, Senior Health Policy Advisor

RE: CR 101 – Proposed Intention to Modify Regulatory Standards for Birth and Death Certificates

Background and Summary:

The rule pertaining to Washington birth and death certificates must be reviewed by December 31, 2001 under the provisions of the Administrative Procedures Act. In addition, changes in federal policy require certain changes.

About every decade, the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) at the Centers for Disease Control promotes changes to three major certificates that are collected nationally: Birth, Death, and Fetal Death. The national certificate revision process is driven by a need to collect current and comparable data across the United States and to insure that the data collected reflects relevant issues and needs of policy makers.

Once NCHS develops its recommended changes, states are strongly encouraged to comply. We then must consider changes to the Washington certificates to meet national goals while balancing our own state needs and the needs of the people who actually complete the certificates. In the case of the birth certificate, there is a short time window (usually 24 hours) to collect the data and usually limited resources available for this data collection at the hospital or birthing facility. The birth certificate is an important public health and legal document, however it is not a medical record. The death certificate presents other challenges for administration, including not only the difficulty of obtaining data from grieving informants but also the requirement for signatures from three different officials separated by time but each critical to providing technical and media information.

The Department of Health has anticipated the need for rule revision and will work closely with the Board to assure the necessary changes are made to the certificates. Through the review process the Board, the Department of Health or any other interested persons may also request other additions, changes, and/or deletions to the certificates. In order to give the Department of

Health necessary time to automate and implement the revised certificates, the rule should be approved by December 31, 2001.

Recommended Board Action:

The Board may wish to consider, amend, and approve the following statement:

The Board of Health directs the Executive Director to file a CR-101 announcing the Board's intention to review and revise WAC 246-491 to make necessary changes to birth and death certificates. The rule will be revised in order to comply with new federal standards, to assure needed data elements are collected for policy analysis, and to make the certificates likely to be completed by those that fill them out.